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Marguerite's Vow

MARGUERITE'S VOW

BY

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author of
Bateman, Ind.

"Oh we live, oh, we live,
And this life that we perceive,
Is a great thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have."

Marguerite's Vow

THE SISTERS

A maiden tall and dark, with dusky hair
Shading a brow too strongly marked for youth;
The contour of her face severely fair
Through stern reserve, though speaking perfect truth,
With harsher lines, perchance, than sculptors love,
And fainter tints of rose than artists seek,
With beauty all of *soul*, and none of dimpled cheek,
My queen, my woman, my Marguerite!
When the rare glimpses of her changing eyes,
Tinted, chameleon-like, with every thought,
Reveal her inner self in holy guise,

Truly it seems, her glance is so serene,
An angel smiles her fringèd lids between.

Her white hands' greeting spreadeth rest and calm,
With gracious motion of true dignity,
As though her heart had utterance in her touch,
And flowed, through lines of faultless symmetry,
To the fair finger-tips—as thus a queen
Might offer welcome with a child's simplicity.
Her voice—ah, Marguerite's voice is Marguerite's charm!
It lingers in your ear, your lips repeat
Each silvery accent as it falls from hers,
But never seems the echo half so sweet,
So soft—a breath might waft its tones away,
Yet so resistless, none can say her nay.

And this is Marguerite—scarce woman yet,
But not a child. The massy braids

Crossing her placid brow in coronet ;
The calm look in her eyes—ah, gentle maid,
Ah, Marguerite, thank God thou art not a woman yet !

Now cometh eve ; slowly the red sun sinks,
And twilight stealeth on to herald night,
And Marguerite prays 'neath a white canopy,
"Teach me, O God, to keep my vows aright !"
A little sister sleeps where Marguerite kneels,
The rosy slumbers of a happy child,
The fair face dimpling with the dreaming thought,
And Marguerite, rising, by fond love beguiled,
"*It must be for my happiness,*" she says,
"*Dearer than mine own self, thy self to hold always!*"

The pretty Elsie moveth restlessly,
Tangling her golden tresses' rippling flow ;
And Marguerite, watching with her proud young eyes,
Kisses the vexing ringlets from her brow,

Fondling the slender hand with tenderness
Deep as a mother's—softly murmuring
The music of her words, cheek pressed to cheek ;
And Elsie, lulled by the sweet whispering,
Closes her violet eyes with a half sigh
That "Margie" chants not ceaselessly love's lullaby !

And Marguerite wonders if two years alone
Can make the change on Elsie's sunny brow
They tell on hers. Her heart yearns, woman-like,
To keep the glad life ever bright, as now ;
And so sleeps Elsie on. The cold stars gleam
Through the weird fretwork in the tracery
Of the old castle casement, Margie's eyes
Searching as if to solve some spirit mystery
By their pale light, and asking of the night,
"In this one purpose of my life, make weakness—might !"

She is not sad, but grave—she is o'er young
To wrap her whole life in another's being.
Dead mother, loving each with thy great love,

Couldst ask such pledge as this, no ill foreseeing?
Couldst cast this shadow o'er thy child's young life,
Bidding her silently, through weal, or woe,
Shield Elsie—clinging Elsie—that no pain
Come to the wayward child? *Thou* couldst not know:
Only the angels count the throbbings of a heart
Stealing its life-blood to work out this woman-part!

Yet had the noble purpose of her life
Made Marguerite noble; and the child
Elsie looked up to her, and fearfully
Read in those great calm eyes the chiding mild
Her waywardness oft needed—yet which Marguerite
From her great love was pained too much to speak.
To which pleads Elsie only, "Marguerite,
Thou knowest I'm not like thee, sweet Marguerite!"

These two alone in this ancestral home—
A castle wondrous in its rich device,
Its tesselated pavement, pictured dome,
And gorgeous-tissued hangings, quaint and old,
And stiff old portraits of the castle lords,
And gems of art in frescoed gallery,
And burnished armor of some early knight,
"Who," says the chronicle, "dyed valiantlie";
And winding passages with arches grand,
And columns carved and fluted by some master-hand.

These two alone in their ancestral home;
And Elsie, singing all the summer day,
Sees Marguerite moving slow through bower and hall,
And fondly smiles at her calm, queenly way,
Then turns to give the butterfly the chase,
As light, as graceful in the flying race,
While Marguerite prays, "My angel mother, thou,
Guarding thy child, aid me to guard my vow!"

THE FETE

So passed the summer sun to autumn haze,
So came the winter bound with ice and snow;
So spring's glad sunshine and its April showers
Woke the sweet strain of wild-wood murmurings low;
Still Elsie, sporting with the frolic winds,
Sent her glad child-life ringing through the glade,
As much a child as when a child—half shy,
Half coy, the winsome, mischief-loving maid!
Springing to Marguerite's side with bounding feet,
To bid her join her anthem—"Life is sweet!"

And Marguerite starting from her reverie,
Turns from the musty lore she loves to con,
And with the earnestness that makes a prayer,
She saith, "So be it aye to thee, sweet one!"
A moment Elsie pauses, wondering why
Her sister Marguerite's speech is ever grave,
Then with her blithesome carol, free as air,
Goes fairy-like, and leaves her to her *rêve*,

And Marguerite thinks with that strange pride
she feels,
That Elsie every day new grace reveals.

"Only," she sighs, "the summer day will pass,
She cannot ever thus be blithe and gay!"
Yet smileth Marguerite, all in wondering
That Elsie's wild caprice should say her nay,
When she, young mentor, urged with pleading
speech
That she would ponder this same musty page
She loved so well. "Nay, tell me not of books,
I hate them all—so wouldst thou vainly teach!"
And then with clinging arms "Why grave,
sweet sister mine?
Thou knowest all—what need have I? Thy
lore is mine!"

And while she guardeth, ever fond and proud,
The sweet unfolding of her cherished flower,
Almost in her young years doth Marguerite feel,
A mother's loving triumph. Hour by hour
She watches strangers as they come and go,
And thinketh each brings homage to the feet

Of beautiful, glad Elsie. But her dream
Tells not of self, claims nought for Marguerite,
Yet, why she scarce could tell, a shade of sadness came,
So mingling with her life, life seemed no more the same.

And *she*, sweet maid, knows not that one is near,
Craving the perfectness of love like hers;
She knows not that the charm of her great soul,
Speaking unconsciously through earnest eyes,
Winneth another humbly to revere,
And tremblingly to claim this priceless prize,
Counting more beautiful her spirit's grace
Than Elsie's sunny charms and faultless face.

"Sister," spake Elsie, poutingly, "the day
Is very quiet here! 'Tis sweet to thee,
Perchance; and yet our castle home would seem
Only the brighter for some revelry."
"Then smile again, sweet Elsie," Marguerite said,
"*I* weary not of thee, though thou of me.
Yet as thou wilt!" and Marguerite, smilingly,

Pressed back the thought—"*My* all, I am not
all to thee!"
While her own hand sought out with jealous
care
The jewels that should make her love more fair.

And so it chanced the books were thrown aside,
And Marguerite, the grave young châtelaine,
Gave order thus—"A revelry we will,
And as of old these halls were gay—so now
again.
I know not how this feast should be,
For this I read not in my books. See only ye,
The stewards of mine household, that no feast
Compare, for splendor, with this revelry.
Proclaim it, as such things are wont to be
proclaimed,
And let the throng that fills these gates be
noble named!"

And now the eve has come, the festal night
Of which our Elsie many nights has dreamed.
The 'wildering lights, the strains of harmony,
The flash of myriad jewels as they gleamed
On breast and snowy arm of lady fair,

Or shone 'mid golden locks and raven hair ;
The banners streaming from the castle walls ;
The crush of flowers ; the breath of sweet perfume ;
The sound of many voices, and the tone
Of ancient gallantry true knights assume ;
All this seems wondrous fair to Elsie's eyes,
But Marguerite's laugh hath almost sound of sighs.

Elsie, the radiant, in coronet of pearls,
And floating film of lace-work shadowy,
Each soft fold draped by Marguerite's loving hand,
Each gem placed by her fingers daintily.
"These pearls our mother wore, her bridal night—
So fair and pure ; so meet for such as thou !
Keep them, my Elsie, like her memory,
The treasure of thy heart, the crown upon thy brow."
And Elsie kissed her hand, then careless cried—
"Needs one more fair to be, to be a bride ?"

Poor Marguerite wears heavy heart to-night,
So heavy that each smile seems steeped in tears;
She stealeth forth from wounding merriment,
That solitude may calm her half-owned fears.
"It is not maidenly," she saith, "to ponder thus;
It is not maidenly—not maidenly."
And so *he* found her with her hot hands clasped,
And her rapt earnest eyes raised tearfully;
In quaint, gold-woven robe, from ancient loom,
She crouches tremblingly; the emeralds
Flashing on troubled brow, from out the gloom.

Why do her pale lips murmur to the night?
Why doth she sorrow when all else are gay,
While all his strong soul yearns to comfort her?
Yet stands St. Clair irresolute—half turns away;
She will not tell *him* of her grief, and yet
Why speak not now his love? Scarcely his voice

Scatters the solitude on Marguerite's ear—
"Why art thou here alone?" "It is my choice!"
Her hands unclasp, from out proud flashing eyes,
Marguerite, the princess, speaks; her slender form
Drawn to its graceful height, with queenly air,
Such as the maid was ever wont to wear,
In stiff enclosure of her quaint brocade;
Only the jewels glittering on her breast
Tell in their tremulous light her heart's unrest.

He, watching, as his heart so long had watched,
Could mark the woman's pride crush maiden grief;
He, loving, as his soul so long had loved,
And yearning as love yearns, to bring relief,
Yet taking warning from the maiden's eye,
Saith only in his longing—"Marguerite,"
And she, won by his tone to gentleness,
"My over-hastiness forgive; an thou wouldst speak,

Methinks I am not made for revelry,
So much more welcome is this calm to me."

He speaks, and Marguerite listens, till her heart
Stands still with wonder at the words he saith;
And he, in speaking, bendeth lower, till
On her pale cheek she feels his quickening breath.
She hears not every word, only her heart
Swells with a joy that startles more than pain;
She turneth from his vows—yet, lingering,
Would hear their echo from his lips again,
And *now* is it no more unmaidenly
That Marguerite's heart frame Marguerite's revery!

And never word spake she, but silently
Sat yielding her whole soul to this delight
Of being loved—so new, so strange to her,
She never knew till now, life was so bright,
Poor child! For the one being she had loved,
Elsie, the gay, light-hearted, was content

With pressing kisses on her sister's cheek,
And knew not what was love, with Marguerite's measurement,
She never spake as though their lives were one,
And Marguerite, deeply loving, lived alone.

For *Elsie* gave she all her glowing heart,
For *Elsie* every thought and every care;
And the glad child repaid her as she might,
A drop for her heart's depth, a smile for every prayer.
"The child is beautiful and fair," she said,
"None look upon her but with loving eyes;
And I?"— She sees a figure grave and dark,
Thoughtful and colorless, with dusky hair, and sighs—
Nor wonders Elsie deems so little worth
The love which is her greatest bond on earth.

Of late, in Elsie's blooming maidenhood
Hath come a shadow, vague and undefined,
To Marguerite's heart—she watcheth jealously,
Lest some that throng to praise should steal away

This casket of her life, her love and life.
"To live, and not be first in Elsie's heart!"
And then come prayers and tears—"My vow!
My vow!
Her happiness my happiness! Apart
From this, my God, what were my life to me!
Make pure my selfish love in Thy great
purity!"

She ne'er had dreamed that there could come
to her
A happiness so great. And now she prayed,
Sitting with folded hands, that she might be
Worthy of him. And yet had Marguerite said
Nor yea, nor nay, unto his pleadings.
She dreamed not he could *question* that she
loved;
He, loving, must read all her soul, she
thought.
"I cannot see thy face," he said, "for gloom;
I cannot read thine eyes, with meaning
fraught;
I do not hear thy voice. Oh, Marguerite,
Dost love me, Marguerite?—My Marguerite!"

'Twas well the darkness hid her from his sight,
For in her eyes there flashed a sudden pain;
She would have told him that her heart was his,
But thoughts of Elsie sealed her lips again.
"It is so strange," she said, "so like a dream,
I cannot answer yet—bid me not speak!
God knows I would not lightly pledge my heart,
Nor give thee less than thy great love should seek!
Only, the memory of an early vow
Maketh me hesitant—speaking now!"

THE OMEN

A nearer sound of the same merriment
That seemed to wound so little time before;
But *now* doth she not shrink nor turn away,
As ringing laughter fills the corridor.
The torchlights, flickering o'er the glittering throng,
The joyous music following in their wake,
Two brilliant cavaliers lead Elsie on,
Vying in courteous gallantry for her sweet sake,

While pendent in the air the snowy wreath is
seen,
Proclaiming Elsie the most fair—the evening's
chosen Queen.

"But where is Marguerite, grave Marguerite?
I kneel for coronal to her alone,"
The laughing Elsie cries—"Thus, Marguerite,
Thine honor shall be greater than mine own!"
Forth from the shadow cometh Marguerite,
As gentle demoiselle of olden time
Stepped from artistic canvas into life;
But failingly, with her full heart in chime,
The echo—"Vive our Queen!" her lips repeat,
While Elsie blushes rosy at her feet.

The light and shadow parted where they stood,
Marguerite, the shadow veiled with mystic
grace;
The light which burnished Elsie's golden hair,
Scarce dared its reflect on *her* saintly face.
Her heart grows faint, her breath comes gasp-
ingly,—
Save Elsie and St. Clair, all else are dim;

She cannot crown the maid, she trembles so;
Her hand, imploring, tends the wreath to him,
And these two only ones her great heart owned,
Stand, radiant in the light—*the crowner and the crowned!*

MARAH

Far, far into the night the hour had sped,
The waxen lights burned with unsteady flame,
The dancers wearied, and the flowers a-droop,
Imaged the languid glance of each fair dame.
The music wakens to a grand farewell,
With stately mien the glittering throng sweep by,
With courtly reverence to the châtelaine,
And homage to the Queen, more daintily.
And silence reigns again in bower and hall,
And darkness closes with its star-gemmed pall.
* * * * * * *
An Eastern lamp burns with a gentle flame,
Which only breaks, but does not quench the gloom,

Its lustre wafting where it penetrates,
The faintest, sweetest, lingering perfume.
On crimson couch, the open casement near,
Lies Marguerite, the silken cushions pressed
By her slight figure restlessly, one arm
Wreathed carelessly above her head, dark-tressed,
Her hand straying among her locks, and listlessly
Dishevelling them in dusky drapery.

She feels so weary in her festal robes,
Almost her heart stands still for weariness!
The wearier, the wearier, she thinks,
For this quick-passing glimpse of happiness.
She tears the jewels from her aching brow,
Then, calmer, toys with them, bright things! Her smile
Mournful, with a strange heaviness, the while
Her lips tell slow and drearily his love—
So drearily as if her life were closed to love!
She knows from the quick blush that Elsie wore
When his hand gave the crown, her dream is o'er!

"How like a Queen thou art, my Marguerite!"
Cries Elsie, fair and gay, in light undress
Flowing and white; with her gold hair unbound,
Rippling in waves that scatter sunshine round.
She presseth kisses with her rosy lips,
Her dewy lips, on Marguerite's burning cheek,
She twineth her light fingers daintily
In Marguerite's passive hand, and wonderingly
The old return of her embrace doth seek;
She kneeleth by the couch, caressingly,
Her head drooped low, on dimpled arms enlaced,
Her rose-tinged foot from sock and shoe set free,
Her attitude a limner might have traced.
Still had she seemed to Marguerite's eyes more fair,
Had not those faded roses wreathed her hair.

"Ah, Marguerite, the happy, happy night!
I am not weary, dear, nay—let me stay!

I cannot sleep so soon—we have not talked—
Thou'rt strange, and scarce like Marguerite to-day!
I do not tire of mirth so soon as thou.
And how the jewels flashed! What brilliant cavaliers!
Was it not gay to-night—like olden time—
Such as our château seemed in long-gone years?
Didst thou not like it, sweet? Thou art so still."
Said Marguerite—"It was my choice to do thy will."

"Thou wouldst have liked it, Marguerite, hadst thou been *Queen!*
The very first of all the revelry!
But not for chaplet would I kneel to them,
Only to thee, sweet Marguerite, to thee.
Thou didst not give it me with thine own hand,
And yet, methinks bestowed by Lord St. Clair,
(The noble Lord! such triumph in his eyes!)
Made it an honor e'en more proud to wear.

I should have chosen him of all the knightly
train,
Were I to kneel in my white robes, to crown
me Queen again!"

"Wouldst kneel to him, my child—to Lord St.
Clair?
Dost love him, Elsie?"
"Nay—I said not so—
He is most noble and most grand. Adieu,
And kiss me quick.—Nay, Marguerite, let me
go!"
"Dost love him, child?" said Marguerite,
merciless;
The color comes and goes the child-brow
o'er—
The blood stands still in Marguerite's writhing
heart.
"Perchance!" says Elsie soft, and says no
more.
"So, go, sweet one,—go, dream of revelry,
For life hath yet long joy in store for thee!"

And so goes Elsie, with a heart so light
She. does not even dream of Marguerite's pain,
Yet marvels, with a moment's wonderment,
That Elsie sought for Marguerite's smile in vain.
She hath not even dreamed, she cannot dream
How great, how perfect is this sacrifice
Of trembling woman, strong in suffering,
Whose bleeding heart to Heaven for victory cries.
"Let her not know my pain!" the crushed heart prays.
"She loves—oh God, my vow! Her peace—always!"

So wearily—so wearily—so wearily
Each second drags its length—a lengthened hour,
So languidly—so dreamily—so drearily,
Lies Marguerite, more in trance than revery,
Learning the bitter lesson that our life
Grows long from our heart history, not years;
Learning there is an agony so fierce,
So crushing, that it dries the fount of tears.

"A whole life long—a whole life long—a long,
long life!" saith she,
And so lies Marguerite all the night, in trance-
like revery.

And through the long, long night—the long,
long night,
She never wept nor moaned—she could but
pray,
Lying there passively, so cold and white,
Waiting with sleepless eyes the slow-
stepped day.
She *heard* each second's flight, all was so still;
She heard each throb of her own heavy heart;
She did not know if it would break—she
scarcely cared,
For it and she seemed things so far apart!
So still, as without breath, she lay, save on
her breast
The unsteady flash of jewelled light through
her long hair untressed.

In a rare moment of forgetfulness
His words of love she murmured fondly o'er,

With lingering mellowness, with rapt intensity,
As if her very soul they did outpour ;
But suddenly the cold clasped hands unclasp,
A burning fire flows through her every vein—
"He doth not love the child!" she cries, "but only me!
But Elsie loves—she *shall not* love in vain!"
She prays!—Who knows the agony of that strange maiden prayer?
That he who loves her, love no more, that Elsie win St. Clair!

And will the morning never, never come?
How cold and weird the star-light, and how pale!
But through the long, long night, the dreary night,
Her quick-drawn breath alone bespeaks her spirit's wail.
Oh! sad, sad Marguerite, lone Marguerite!
The morning breaketh o'er the hills, so gray
Almost as it were night, almost it were
Of hope—of youth's fond hope—the burial day.

Thy heart chants voicelessly its requiem,
Marguerite,
No other human heart those wild-sobbed
chords shall hear—
Thy heart knells ceaselessly the requiem,
Marguerite!

THE EARLY VOW

And thus the day has come! no gladdening
rays
Of sunshine glittering over lea and lawn;
No smile of flowers dew-gemmed; no carolling
Of joyous warbler ushering in the morn.
The air is thick and close, and heavy winged
With the rich garden odors stealing in,
Almost until it cloys from lusciousness;
The birds are wearying in their ceaseless
twittering;
Too sunless e'en for shadows seems the
summer-day,
And Marguerite, at her casement gasps for
breath, and strives to pray!

A light, firm footfall in the court below,
Sends tell-tale blushes to the olive cheek,
Which to its wonted pallor quick returns;
And Marguerite, pondering what she shall speak—
How she shall have him believe truth is not truth,
How she shall have him think she loveth not,
And yet herself speak true—turns calm and slow,
Too calm and slow for one in maiden youth,
Forgetful of her festal garb and streaming hair,
Her lingering footstep only telleth her despair,
As in the grand old oaken hall she meets St. Clair.

His hope leaps in his eyes—his eager eyes—
He, doubting nothing of his sure success,
Stands silent, chafing in his restlessness,
And looks, but does not speak, his eagerness.
Had he loved Elsie, and not Marguerite,
He had not waited for her tardy speech;
His hand had clasped her hand impatiently,

His words had urged her words. So reverently
He loves, in loving Marguerite, he scarcely
dares
To press a love he deems unworthy hers,
Until she claim it hers by her own sweet
consent,
Until she yield her love with *his* love's
measurement.
Yet must he speak, for naught saith Marguerite.

"So—let me lead thee where we stood at eve;
Be this one spot of all on earth most dear,
Here, where I breathed my vows, thou, tell me
not in vain.
Why tremblest, Marguerite? what dost thou
fear?"
"I had not thought," she answered, mournfully,
"I should bring sorrow to so true a heart;
Yet if I love not as thou lovest me,
'Twere better for thy love that we should
part."
"It cannot be!" he cried despairingly—
"When thou hast *all* my heart, it cannot be!"

A faint, wild cry broke from her quivering lips;
She would have fallen, but he held her fast.
"God grant me strength!" she murmured—
"Lead me right!
Nay, I am stronger now, St. Clair, release thy grasp;
Only I cannot tell thee where we stand;
I cannot tell thee *here*. Nay, follow me;
I am but faint and weary—reach thy hand!"
"So would I ever be support to thee—
So would I ever stay thy failing feet!
Thou dost not bid me leave thee, Marguerite,
Thou *canst* not bid me leave thee, Marguerite!"

"Thou hast kept vigil all the long night through,
I tell it by thy robes and streaming hair;
Thou art not yet thyself—oh, Marguerite,
How would I cherish thee with fondest care!
I told thee yester-e'en—thou saidst not nay—
What thought hath grieved thee through the sleepless night?
I told thee yester-e'en—thou saidst not nay—
Thy silence gave me hope—have I not hoped aright?"

She raised a quaint wrought hanging, and they
stood
Within the archway of the chapel old;
The cold, gray twilight of that summer morn
Through glowing panes, rich-dyed, no longer
cold,
But radiant as with life and hope, in warm
tints lay
Aslant the pavement of rich Roman art,
Aslant the marble slabs memorial,
On sculptured effigy, and antique bust,
On crest and shield of knights armorial;
It flashed almost in radii round Marguerite's
head.
She paused – "Here will I answer thee, St.
Clair," she said.

They stood beside a low, carved granite couch,
A beauteous chiselled figure rested there;
But half concealed the snowy marble veil
Its flowing outline, womanly and fair;
Too full of grace it seemed for lifeless stone,
Almost the warm breath seemed to part the
lips,

To swell the rounded cheek, yet cold, cold
death
Was imaged there; alone his icy breath
Breathed in the soulless marble: Elsie's face
The sleeping image wore, with Marguerite's
grace.

Lower and lower bendeth Marguerite,
She laves the drooping hand with burning
tears,
That cool the passion of her fevered heart—
Young heart grown old in that long night of
years!
"I have no other friend," wails Marguerite,
"But only thee, sweet mother, only thee!"
Low, lest her lover hear her, waileth she—
Low, lest he wonder at her grief, grieves
Marguerite.
"Surely the angels guard our poor humanity;
I suffer, my sweet mother, guard thou me!
To thee my vow was made—oh, shield me now,
Lest, yielding, I bring grief to thee, by this, my
perjured vow!"

Still clinging to that hand, as if it gave
The comfort that no earthly voice might speak,
With eyes yet downcast, fearing lest he read
Therein that her poor heart was faint and weak.
"I would we were but friends," she said, "and only friends!
St. Clair, forgive if I have caused thee pain;
Thou art so true, so dear a friend to me—
Not more—thou never canst be more—plead not again!
Thou wilt but move to tears my woman's heart;
It cannot grant thee more, dear friend, true, noble, as thou art!"

"Thou wilt not raise thine eyes, and, Marguerite,
Thy voice is full of tears—it trembles with thy tears;
God bless thee for thy pity, Marguerite,
If these are wept for me—I would repeat
Never one word of love to bring thee suffering.
Forgive—I have so loved—have I not won
The right to soothe thy heaviness of heart?

Are all thy tears for me?—oh, Marguerite,
Not till thou say'st 'I love *not*!' need we part!
I would not plead against thy happiness and mine;
My heart is strong for any grief, unless that grief be thine—
I only plead—Grieve not thy heart, in teaching grief to mine!
Oh! Marguerite, thou art o'er young, o'er young
To speak thus darkly of an 'early vow'—
Is it this something, promised when a child,
That robs me of my happiness—that brings thee anguish now?
Perchance thou followest blindly in thy zeal;
As friend should counsel friend I counsel thee,
Kneel, pray that Heaven lend judgment merciful
To teach thy heart aright. *Then* give to me
An answer—what thou wilt, so that it be
Unfettered by the vow thy child-lip breathed;
And though I seek no joy apart from thee,

If but my heart alone learn life's lone bitterness,
I murmur not, so *thou* find happiness!"

"I know not why," she said, "the happiness should be my lot
That does not come to all. I do not crave
A life unmarked by pain, I only pray
That through its trials heavenly grace may save
And make my weakness strong! No human heart
But meets some answering echo through the vale of years—
It may be not of joy, yet how it soothes
When other eyes grow heavy with our tears!
And what were life, lived we for self alone?
Each heart needs twine its tendrils round some kindred one!

"What if mine eyes show tears? I do not fear
To let *thee* see them there; tears for myself and thee;

I have not wept the long, long, sleepless night,
I thought myself more strong! Look pityingly
On a weak maiden's weakness. Oh that mother-love
Might soothe my pain, with sweet-voiced whisperings!
Sometimes when it is dark hast thou not wished
Thine eyes might see the light?—what couldst thou do but pray?
So have I prayed—it seems all darkness yet;
Man can but wait till God's sun bring the day!
My pledge was given to one who sleeps beneath the earth's cold crust—
So help me, God! my woman's heart shall keep my childish trust!

"It is not for my happiness, St. Clair,
To list thine earnest words - nor is it thine
To urge me still. Go, friend, be yet a friend,
God's peace go with thee. Every thought of mine,

In blessing for thy love, bids me forget that love.
I have been weak to tell thee of a pain
Thou canst not comprehend—forget, forget
The strange confession! Let me wear my pride again!
This *vow* so wraps my heart—wraps my whole life,
It leaves no room for thee. It *must* bring peace
To follow on where duty leads. Go, leave me now,
And if thou thinkest aye of Marguerite,
Think how she blessed thee, kneeling here at her dead mother's feet!"

Her hand ached with his strong despairing grasp,
Her brow burned with his kiss of bitterness;
She heard his step grow fainter in the hall,
She heard the chapel *ring* with emptiness;
She never raised her eyes—each footfall seemed
To press down, deeper down, the memory

Of all she held most dear; the joy, the pain
Of her young life—to close them in her heart
eternally!

A haze came o'er her eyes, she could not see,
A chill crept through her heart and made it
numb,
The past, the future, present, formed a blank,
So void, so vast, so throbless, so intense,
She cared not if she lived or died—she
cared not what might come.
Had not her heart-strings knelled the death of
joy?
Was not her girlhood dead? Had she not lived
A long, long life of pain? What could there
come
Greater to her than her known suffering?
Oh, Marguerite! lone Marguerite! drear Mar-
guerite!
She knelt there till the sun grew low—alas,
alas the gloom
In Marguerite's heart, in Marguerite's life—
by Marguerite's mother's tomb!

THE SACRIFICE

Because true woman truly loves but once,
So hath her love more worth. She cannot yield
Her holiest incense—ay, her spirit's self,
Her every thought, to one more dear than self,
And freely trust her heart with him alone unsealed,
And then forget that she has loved!
The future cannot be to her what the glad past has been,
She cannot say—"Oh, heart, sufficient to thyself
Be in thyself! In loving not, now, as of yore
Thou shalt be gay, glad-hearted! Love thou not!"
The chords once waked, must throb forevermore;
And yet so proud she is, her eyes will learn to smile,
Pain, ever-present, gnawing at her heart the while,
For love is woman's life!

And man? Is he more strong? Or yet in sooth
Perchance he loves not with his whole great soul,
Or counteth love a folly, worthy youth,
A light *delassement*, easy of control.
Yet are there hearts that God sends fresh from heaven
That cannot lightly dream of what the angels sing:
Men's hearts, so strong in earnest manliness,
Their steel but proves its truth through suffering;
And these, not pining for what may not be,
Can stem with steady feet life's changing tide,
The stronger that a lingering of regret
Turns heart and will away from love so vainly tried.
Love is not all their life, for they are men;
"The whole wide world is theirs," they say,
"courage and forth again!"

Alas, that there be those like Marguerite,
Craving each night and morn on bended knee,

Forgetfulness of some one crushing grief
That eats into their life, while jealously
They guard their secret with their grief-taught smiles,
Cold glittering smiles that youth should never know!
God grant not often swells the mournful cry—
"Father, why do I bow to this one woe?
Thy mercy maketh all things else so bright,
I would not murmur. Father, show thy child the light!"
For this was Marguerite's ceaseless prayer.
And evermore, alas! poor Marguerite,
Craving, as women will, the sympathy
Of some true woman-heart, must she endure
Life's wearying monotone, and suffer silently.
What could she breathe to Elsie, for whose sake
Her life was thus embittered? What unfold
Of grief to such glad maidenhood? The ringing laugh
Floating through open casements—Elsie's laugh—
Seems mockery of life, to this young heart grown old.

When, mother-like, at eve, hands clasped o'er
the fair head,
Called blessings down, her voice would
scarcely fail
In the soft evening hymn; yet how she longed
To feel warm raining kisses meet her voice-
less wail—
To clasp the child with wild convulsive clasp,
Of pain long suffered, and so long withheld;
to break
From the calm chanted tones, and sob out all
her grief instead!
For woman's grief grieves ceaselessly for
sympathy.

And yet so bravely Marguerite struggled on,
That not one trivial act of daily duty
Her hand left unfulfilled;
Yet all seemed cold, task-like, and wanting
beauty,
Fulfilled so faithfully as when a student gains
Some copy by a careful measurement,—
Each line must be exact, else will there be
No semblance of perfection in his work.—
Himself the *instrument*

In all this mass of detail—not the *master-will.*

St. Clair, in little time, chanced oft again
Within the castle gates, and Marguerite's smile
Welcomed him frank and true, as though he were
Such friend as she had said. And thus, the while
She learned to hide her heart, he learned to think
His suit had been in vain. He could not penetrate
The mask of woman-pride each action wore,
But yielded, in sad dignity, himself to fate.
He knew she would not change the word that she had said;
And with hope fled, he turned at last to Elsie's smiles instead.

She, child-like, cared not that her dimpled cheek
Blushed rosy-red for him. The petted maid,
To whose sweet baby-face and winning ways,
And light caprice, was homage ever paid,

Could never dream of love without return.
She, with so little thought to hide, had never sought
To learn concealment's art; and Marguerite,
From sadder knowledge, would not chide a *naïveté* untaught;
So sacred to her own crushed heart youth's impulse seemed.
She prayed her darling's happiness; she watched, but never schemed.

And once again, St. Clair, half hesitant,
Is by her side. More calmly now he pleads
Than on that well-remembered eve; he pleadeth less.
While Marguerite's heart, with Marguerite's heart, for Elsie intercedes—
For Elsie and St. Clair, these two beloved,
She stifles her heart's pain, with notes of thankfulness
For that her pain brings happiness to both,
More dear to her than her own happiness.
"I know," he said, "that for thyself my love would plead in vain,

So have I quelled my first great love—say me
not nay again."

She was no saint, with heart from passions free;
It was not crime, but weakness, that the
blood
Flowed quicker in her veins, for the grieved
tone
Of love for her, half hidden in his speech,
E'en while he plead for Elsie. She withstood
The sweetened poison of the thought, for
Elsie's sake,
As guardian of her darling's happiness. Her
hands
Clasping, unclasping nervously, the only sign
All was not calm within. Queen-like she
stands—
"Tell me, thou lovest Elsie as thou ne'er hast
loved before"—
"I had loved Elsie best," he said, "had I not
loved thee more!

"I loved thee, Marguerite, as man may love
The woman of his dream; so far above

His earthly hopes, only the stars of night
Read on his dreaming lips the words—'I love!'
The day seems dark to him without her smile,
The memory of the face he dreamed—an angel's face!
So fills his heart with visionary love, no earthly form
With fairest brow and brightest eyes hath grace
To win him from this love; and through the day
His heart's sweet vision seems an angel ward
Urging him heavenward, as pleasing her
Who is not of the earth. He knows himself
Unworthy angel's love, but loves he yet
The more for his despair. So I loved thee, oh, Marguerite!"

He speaks as in a dream, eyes seeing naught,
Fixed on the changing sky; and Marguerite,
The image of his dream, half turns away,
Lest her eyes' trouble say his dream was sweet.

"No memory, St. Clair," she sternly said,
"Should be so dear to thee as Elsie's self;
No rival in thy love should Elsie know,
E'en be it but a dream of fancies fled.
I grieve I dare not trust her happiness with thee,
So little loving—oh, St. Clair, couldst ask *my all* of me!"

"How could I choose but love one who received
Thy heart's whole love, so lavishly outpoured?
If worthy thine, I knew that she must be
Worthy of more than mine—she, the adored
Of thee, my dream,—nay, Marguerite, sweet friend,
Seem not so stern; I could not ask of thee
Thy lovely Elsie's hand, had she not won
The truest, fondest, earthly love from me.
Truly I grieved for thee, as strong men grieve, in pain:
Men should not long regret a prayer once urged in vain;

So have I ceased to crave this one great boon
denied,
Knowing myself unworthy thee—thou an
unwilling bride.

"We speak as friend to friend—oh, Marguerite,
The past enfolds the romance of my life,
Its holiest affections, for no after love
Can claim the heart so free and so entire:
Grieving and pain have bruised it in the
strife.
There comes a time when waking man must
learn
Life is not all a dream; and if he turn
Back to his youth, its fancies and its fire,
A moment dwelling on the spirit of his dream,
The memory is passionless—and passionless
He turns him back to life's reality.

"By yon bright sinking sun that flashes now
Its parting lustre on thy softening brow,
I love but Elsie only. This to thee
Who taught me first to love, with love's
intensity!

I cannot love as I have loved before,
But love her not the less that I *have* loved thee more!"

"And Elsie?" – "Ay, she bade me come to thee."
The sinking sun fades in the western sky;
The red flush creeps away from Marguerite's brow,
And leaves her in the shadow. Her reply
Comes from slow-parted lips, with laboring breath:
"I give my dearest treasure then, to thee,
Dear friend. My cherished one henceforth shall turn
From me, who have so loved, to thee, untried; oh, guard her tenderly,
So fair, so young, so true!"

Her hand, first raised on high,
Trembles on his bowed head, and solemnly
The maiden blessing speaks:
"God guard ye both, dear ones, forevermore,
Elsie, my child, and thee, my brother! Bless ye now,

And bring ye, hand in hand, to the eternal
shore!"

LOVE'S DEPTH

The two sat silently, as those may sit
Who know their hearts from very sympathy,
Think each the other's thoughts; what need of
words,
When silence giveth speech more perfectly?
Thinking the same thought each—and yet, how
differently!
Marguerite, half bending o'er the child, her
fingers straying
With careless grace through the rich, gold-
tressed hair;
The shadowy light of love and pain, her dark
eyes filling,
Her heart upon her face—who had not called
her fair!

The last, last night that Elsie seemed her own!
Strange tenderness, e'en for her tender love,
this gave her touch,

The child whose happiness would make her
life-long pain,
Who, in her child-years, she had loved with
mother-love,
To yield the first place in this heart to him!
Surely they asked too much!
And now these two, she had no life beyond,
These two had no more need of Marguerite!
"My vow! strength, guarding angels! Let me
feel
Life yet is dear to me, for his and Elsie's
sake!"
The heart is very great that would not break,
Yielding its all to what *had been* its all,
Leaving itself thus lone and desolate;
But Marguerite strains her closer, without sob
or sigh,
Smiling her love unutterable, so tenderly!

"Oh, Marguerite!" cries Elsie, merrily,
"'Tis sweet to love!" "Ay, child, unless it bring
A bitterness life-lasting," murmureth
Poor Marguerite, silently, with gasping
breath.

"Say, sister mine, why hast thou never loved?
Or seems it folly to thy heart so grave?"
"Child," sayeth Marguerite, with stern voice
and mien,
"It cannot seem a folly to the wisest heart,
Since heaven the lesson teaches, and its praise
heaven's voices sing.
I, *I* have never loved who so have lovèd thee!
Oh, Elsie, thy young happy heart could learn
love's depth from me!

"Forgive, I had not marked the waning hours;
I must not keep thee from thy rest, sweet one.
Closer, and rest thy head upon my shoulder,
so—
The last, last night, that thou art mine alone!
Elsie, long loved and watched, how can I
let thee go!
My little one, my child, my all!"
"Margie, I leave thee not, there only comes
Another dear one to our castle home;
Another for thy sister heart to love.
Wilt thou not love him, sweet?"

"There could not come
One throb of joy, my treasured one, to thee
That should not thrill some chord within my heart.
The keeper of thy happiness can but be dear to me!
My darling, I have prayed as few can pray—
Ay, with my heart's first prayer, thy happiness."
More closely Elsie nestled, whispering timidly,
"The angels ever thus thy pleading bless!"

THE BRIDAL

The sun has risen gloriously,
The casket of the dawn
Outpours a wealth of dewy gems
To deck thy bridal morn!

The sun has risen beauteously,
The dawning's blush is fair
As rose tinge on thy dimpled cheek,
Bride-maiden, with gold hair!

Wake, for the birds are carolling
Thy bridal matin-song;
Forth from thy dreams and dewy sleep,
While we their chant prolong!

Sweet dreams that usher in the day,
Sweet golden dreams of love;
Carol, ye birdlings, joyously,
Smile, skies, love's vows above!

Ah, rosy as the morning mist
Thy snowy veil shall seem;
Thy life be glad as this glad dawn,
And golden as thy dream!

Bride-maiden wake, to prayer, to prayer!
The sunny moments flee;
Our lips are mute, but angels hear
Our "Benedicite"!

Softly to Elsie's ear, at break of day,
Sweet voices wafted up the simple chant,
Sweet maiden voices, while fair fingers twined
The orange buds for her gold tresses' ornament;

And Elsie, lying in her waking dream,
Thinks but how sweet it is—how very sweet!
While all the sadness of the bridal-song
Thrills through the heart-pulse of poor Marguerite!
Yet, thoughtful, saith she:—"Little one, the song is o'er;
Thy smile should thank for loveliest wreath bride-maiden ever wore!"

And Elsie blushing at her casement stands,
Dimpled with smiles, and saying timidly,
"Sweet friends, the day be nigh when ye shall hear
Such joyous song as met my waking ear,
May bridal-chimes for each and all soon sound their melody!"

Then peals of gurgling laughter fill the air,
Soulless and sweet, and silvery, speech is o'er;
The maidens turn them to their cottage homes,
Chanting a lightsome carol, blithe and gay;
And Rose's cheek is redder than before,
The while she seeketh Louis by the way;

And giddy Blanche sees visions passing fair,
Of village church in festal garb arrayed,
And her sweet self with bride-wreath in her hair.

Ah, tell me, is the gift for weal or woe,
To feel with passion light hearts cannot know;
With joy that trembles on the fount of tears,
With grief that grieves unsoothed through passing years?

How solemnly the grand old organ pours
Its wedding greeting on this wedding-morn!
The prayers and blessings of a thousand hearts,
Silenced from awe, seem on its chords upborne.
The expectant throng the castle chapel crowd,
With reverent hush the bridal group await;
They rise, a murmur fills the air—"How beautiful!"
As through the aisle it files in glittering state,

And yet not charmed so much by Elsie's
Psyche face,
As Marguerite's saint-like dignity and mourn-
ful grace.

The priest hath asked—"Who gives this maid
away?"
And Marguerite, with that wondrous calm
upon her brow,
Speaking the high resolve an angel's face
might wear,
Untremblingly, her right of love hath granted
Lord St. Clair.
She only stands an instant with her head low
bowed,
And hands tight-folded o'er her beating heart;
Stands thus unnoticed, for the world deems
not
Of pain heart-crushing 'neath a brow serene.
The moment she hath prayed is o'er. *Her* act—
None knew how truly—rends the lives apart
Heaven formed to be but one. And yet she
dreams

Her happiness hath bought these dear ones
happiness—
Her vow hath been fulfilled through her own
bitterness.
Alas! mistaken duty prompts the sacrifice,
Yet surely angels bless this woman's nobleness.

THE SHADOW OF THE HEARTH

To Marguerite's heart, so wrung with suffering,
To Marguerite's life, so lone with loneliness,
There came another pain. She could have borne
Her accepted part with that submissiveness
Time mellows to an acquiescence murmurless,
As of one saying ceaselessly "'Tis better so,"
And which men name Content, but angels
Faith,
Because through trust alone these words it
saith;
But this new pain she met on suppliant knee,
Crying through blinding tears, "On me—not
them—but me,
If error there hath been, fall all the misery!"

Alas! too surely came the consciousness
To Marguerite, watching covertly, that Hope had been
A brighter limner than Reality.
A something lighter hearts had never seen
'Neath the calm tenor of the Castle-life,
Showed her whose wistful eyes looked more than surface deep,
The shadow of the hearth; for Elsie's eyes,
Shallow and shadowless, were yet too light
The fulness of a woman's trust to keep.
She loved him—ay, capricious children love—
She loved him when he was not grave; and if he were,
He might seek sympathy of Marguerite—not her!

She was a pretty thing, a graceful thing;
The prettier when his actions told her this;
She never wearied when he chose to make
The same soft speech with oft-chimed emphasis.
She loved him for his noble brow and eyes,
Not for the intellect which made them grand.

She had no inner life; his was unknown to her;
How should she read the depths she could not understand?
Was it a marvel if the memory
Of his lost "*Dream*" came sometimes back to him?
Or that he ever craved the sympathy
Of something more than smiles? But Marguerite,
Reading with great calm eyes his trouble on his brow—
Marguerite, whose thoughts had ever chimed with his,
Spake never word to soothe—'*Twas Elsie's province now!*

A pretty thing she was, a graceful thing;
Formed for the sunshine of the summer day;
Almost she seemed Undine in maidenhood,
As sweet and soulless in each winning way.
He loved her well—the sportive, wayward child—
As child—not wife. Alas! for he had deemed

The bud the lovely germ of fairer flower,
But the unfolding he had vainly dreamed!

The heart will crave the earnest and the true,
And outward grace must cease to satisfy,
Unless the brow be lofty with the mind's impress;
Unless the spirit's light the mortal sanctify!

He, struggling with the utter banishment
Of aim and purpose that should make life great,
Unable from his weariness and loneliness to work against his fate,
Or seek his wasting mind its needful nourishment;
And Marguerite, with the ceaseless prayer upon her lips
Which often through hot tears these two dear names expressed,
The struggle of her life to make them *one*.
Not for herself

She wept, but prayed—"Forgive me, Father,
for his pain!"
Thus praying from the love controlled, but
unrepressed:
Elsie, the child-bride, wedded to the earnest
man,
Holding so light a thing the key of his great
heart:
So lived these three—so closely bound, so
far apart!

They called her cold—these two she had so
loved—
Because they knew her not. The solitude
Of mind and thought her daily life confessed,
—By thought that fathomed not—so little
understood!
A Father's gracious hand worked for his
children's good.
Ah! not in vain each tender chord was strained
With painful tension to its present strength!
Taught by her own heart's pain to meet
heart-suffering,
She rose ensanctified to high resolve at length.

No life, however desolate, need be so purposeless,
But struggling to an holy aim *must* soothe its bitterness!

Her over-burdened heart outpoured its love
Within the desolate dwellings of the poor;
And little children, for her sad, sweet smile,
Stood charmed listeners at the cottage door,
The while her soft voice soothed some weary pain
With sympathy more welcome than her gifts,
A sympathy which says "God made us both,"
A charity which tenderly the lowly heart uplifts.
As days passed on and gathered into years,
Each night from grateful hearts uprose the untutored prayer,
"Kind angels guard her rest who loveth us!
The riches not of earth be our sweet lady's share!"

THE DREAD ANGEL

O Death! a rest to weariness of Earth,
Yet comest thou in dread! Hushed hearts, and eyes
Heavy with weeping, watch the spirit's flight,
Groping in shadows, blind to the new after-light,
Kept back by what is mortal of the man!
Surely this light enshrines his spirit now;
He smiles—not with Earth's smile; within his eyes
Things past are not, but only things to come;
The Death-peace leaves its holiness upon his brow!
—"Not dead! I cannot bear it, Marguerite!"
Cries Elsie with wild sobs—"I loved him so!
Not *dead*—thou hast not loved—oh, Marguerite!"

Her cheek wet with the rain of Elsie's tears,
Her arms enfolding her, as in days past

A little child she lay, close to that loving
breast,
Soothes Marguerite—till the paroxysm past,
Her sobs grow faint, and slumber comes at
last.
Now, now may *Marguerite* weep! such
scalding tears
As Elsie never knew. The agony
Pent up in her shut soul through tearless
years,
The few that seemed so long! As breaks the
storm,
Fiercer and darker for long gathering,
Her heart outpours itself from passionate
depths
In ears that Death has sealed to wondering;
Over his pulseless hand her burning lips
Rain love ne'er breathed before; his icy brow
Warms with the impress of her maddening
kiss
Till that she shrinks away lest life be
there.
Alas! thou kneelest, Marguerite, alone in thy
despair!

"My love, that never met my answering eyes!
My love hushed in my heart, but hushed in vain!
My heart will break, O God! my heart will break;
It bows, it writhes, beneath its weight of pain!
My love that had been mine—my own, my own,
Save for my vow! O God! it was a curse
That darkened all my life—a bitter curse!
—Dead—dead!
I could have borne my pain alone, but *thy* heart too hath bled!
Poor heart! so fondly loved by mine own broken heart!
For I may love thee now thy need of love is o'er,
And I may tell thee now that I have loved,
When earth-love with its pain will never grieve thee more!"

Kissing his forehead till its iciness
Chilled to her very heart, and froze the tears

Back in their depths again; then kneeling low
Beside him, with clasped hands, as who reveres
The majesty mysterious of Death,
Sobbing herself to calm, she murmureth—
"The shadow of earth's pain has left thy brow,
Thine eyes will never wake to weariness,
I would not call thee back to suffering
To make my own sad life less full of emptiness!"
Then rising, stooped she o'er him with her passion's depth confessed,
With tearless eyes and grief all spent, save in her throbbing breast.
Left him—the Dead—with outward calm, as in earth's pulseless rest,
Love's last adieu ensanctified, on his closed eyelids pressed,
And went—submissively.

Chamber of Love and Death—of sacred rest,
The dying sunlight floods with glory now;
The calm of purer worlds embalms thine atmosphere,

And soothes the grief that weeps above the
sleeper's brow.

"LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH"

"Come, Marguerite, let us stand where he can
hear,
For I would speak of him." And Margue-
rite knew
From the unwonted light in Elsie's eyes,
The waking of the soul-glance struggling
through:
Read in the pallor of the rounded cheek,
In the soft languor of her erst glad tone,
The sun of Elsie's life should sink and wane
E'er yet the maiden bloom had rounded into
noon;
The shadows of life's passing seemed to raise
and sanctify
To the new dawn of life this temple of the soul,
Taught first, by glimpse of death, its immor-
tality.

"So—let me rest my head, as in those days
When I was child to thee, dear Marguerite;
It is so new to me, this weariness,
And yet not sad, save with much tenderness.
Oh Sister! do not weep; thou art so strong,
My weakness looks to thee for aid. Thy heart,
So truer than mine own—so greater than mine own,
Shall teach me of its fullness e'er we part.
Speak as *he* spake, of love, immortal love,
Life of this earthly life, and soul of life above!"
And Marguerite's eyes grew dark with tears, (suppressed,
Lest they should sadden Elsie), while she moaned reply—
"Alas, sweet one! I cannot teach thee aught;
Thou art more near to knowledge of this Love than I!"

A strange, sad sight it was to see these two
Thus standing, hushed in memory of the grief

Their hearts had wept together: standing calm,
Enshadowed by the grief which was to come,
Fraught with such desolate loneliness to one alone,
Here by the tomb of him whose life had been
Strangely enwoven in the lives of each.
The Chapel's twilight gloom enshrouding duskily
These two pale women's forms, and softening
With a mysterious grace each marble curve
Which else had worn his image stonily.

Spake Elsie, "More than in the first days of its loss
Knoweth my heart its loneliness. A change
Seems on the surface of all earthly things
That meet mine eyes: yet sweet and strange
The new perceptions dawning on my soul.

Between the seen and the invisible, the veil
Grows lighter even now: O Marguerite!
The lonely path within the shadowed vale
I tread with weak, but not reluctant feet.
And with the nearing of that other life
My waking soul doth feel the shallowness
Of all that in my happier life my heart called
happiness.

"Now that his silent lips can never answer
mine,
I fain would question him of high and holy
things;
I fain would hear again the thoughts that
wearied once,
Urged by the sad and earnest voice that
now Heaven's anthem sings.
Methought, dear Marguerite, I truly loved,
Because my heart was happy in his smile;
But now I know the soul I never strove to
read
In all its tenderness, my lightness grieved
the while.

Alas! I never looked beyond the passing
day;
I never knew the priceless depths from which
I turned away;
The knowledge of the lost but came when
grief first bade me pray!
And only now, my own sweet Marguerite,
I feel what thou hast been to me—thy 'Little
One.'
How truly thou hast loved — how truly
striven
That my child heart miss not the mother
gone!
I did not love thee with the same true love,—
Wilt thou forgive me, Marguerite? I grieved
Thee in my waywardness—too coldly paid,
Too lightly held the tenderness my life
received."

"Elsie, my treasure," Marguerite moaned,
through fast-dropped tears,
"Thou *lovest* as I love—speak not of what is
past!

More than my heart hath dared to pray, God
granteth me at last;
The sad, sad gladness of this night o'erflows
all sadder years."

The golden head lay pillowed on her breast;
The pale, pale cheek to Marguerite's close-
pressed;
The pulses of their hearts, too full for utterance,
Throbbing in silent unison. And so the eve
Wore on into the night. And the night-chill
Crept through the veins of Elsie, lying still,
—so still!

* * * * * * * *

But the night-dews were the only tears to
grieve,
For Marguerite thought she slept!

Not first to Marguerite's heart with day had
come
The consciousness of utter loneliness;
But kneeling in the dawning light, she prayed—

"If this must be, thank God that thus it
came!"
And kissed the icy hand enfolded in her
own,
In calm, deep grief—no thought of bitter-
ness
Teaching her soul to murmur at God's will—
His holy comfort whispered—"Peace, be
still!"

E'en yet was Marguerite young to be alone,
So utterly alone in all the earth,
To prove the sadness of her empty home,
To meet the silent memories of her lonely
hearth.
Yet she whose woman heart was formed to
live by love,
Who craved no earthly thing save only
love;
Bowed to the chastening rod, and looked
beyond
Things mortal, and those chapel-tombs, to
things above.

And when she needs must grieve for her great weariness
Of solitude, she kneels between the tombs—
She only left of all the three—with hands upraised,
The calm that floods the place her brow illumes
With beauty such as angels love—low murmuring:
"She, taught by him the higher love to know,
By me, through him, is of the angels now!
Father, thy mercy wrought this blessing on my vow!
The sorrow of my life fades into nothingness;
Thy peace o'erflows my soul with hope of endless blessedness!
Life's sunset shadows gather o'er my failing eyes;
I believe—I wait—in longing for Heaven's fairer skies!"

Oft-time the dole of suffering taught to man below

Seems very great for human hearts to bear:
God knows how great! and voices from the skies,
With their soft murmurings of faith, arrest despair;
And ever grows the suffering soul more strong
To believe and to endure, through this true faith,
Which brighter gloweth in the darkening hour.
For as His children need, the Father measureth.

The light grew calmer in her mournful eyes,
Her soul rose strong above her buried pain;
And blessings wreathed her name with *immortelles*,
And wrote, in mourning hearts—"*She hath not lived in vain!*"

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